

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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## BEADLE AND HIS WOODEN TYPES

by John C. Kunzog

If one were to accept the statements of writers on Beadle's early life at full value then that young man must have been fully as ingenious and versatile as the heroes of his yet-to-be-published "yellowbacks."

Some writers glibly tell how young Beadle when but 14 years old cut letters out of cherry blocks and printed feed (or seed) bags, receiving for his pecuniary profit the sum of one cent per letter.

Shades of Gutenberg! Here was a youth that shattered all precedents. Whereas Gutenberg disappeared for seven years after seeing his first movable types squashed under the heavy pressure needed to transfer the impression to paper, and toiled quietly to perfect a formula for type metal before being able to give to the world his 42-line Bible, young Beadle proved that the only requisites to become an exponent of the Art Preservative was to possess a jackknife and whittle out of wood the 26 letters of the alphabet and fare forth as a printer!

The statements made by some writers regarding Beadle and his wooden types smacks of sciolistic absurdity. No one can write intelligently on a subject of which they have little or no knowledge, and those writers who place a jackknife and some blocks of cherry wood into the hands of 14-year-old Beadle and with a few flourishes of the trusty steel blade transmute him into a printer, had better inquire into the rudiments of printing.

One writer boldly states that young

Beadle placed these 26 letters into a gunny sack and traveled from place to place, offering to print feed bags at a penny a letter. The customer with only four letters comprising his name would have his bags printed for one-fourth the cost to his neighbor who required 16 letters to spell his name.

I trust my readers won't think I am trying to shatter a pretty legend or dispel the mythical halo woven around the progenitor of the dime novel when I state that I don't believe Beadle ever printed feed bags; that he ever charged a penny a letter; that he carried his types in a gunny sack strolling the highways as an itinerant printer; or that 26 letters constituted his stock in trade.

If Beadle carved one type of each letter of the alphabet, giving him the 26 wooden types mentioned by some writers, he couldn't even "set up" the word "feed" for it requires two "e" characters; and for that identical reason he would have been unable to "set" or print his own name.

Edmond Pearson in his book, "The Dime Novel," gives the best portrayal of Erastus Beadle of any book or article I have read on the subject. He does not designate the number of characters Beadle carved from wood; he places Beadle, when a youth, on a farm in Chautauqua County, N. Y., while his parents were living at Cooperstown, N. Y., about 200 miles distant. Pearson states that Beadle printed "seed bags"—this statement is typographically more acceptable, for changing the words "feed bags" to "seed bags" is more in line for the ability of a tyro printer; while Chautauqua County, N. Y. and seeds is

practically synonymous.

Allow me to draw a hypothetical word picture of Erastus Beadle: He was born at what later became Cooperstown, N. Y. in 1821. When about 14 years old, he, like all boys of that age, longed for better things than his parents could afford, but there were few opportunities for work in that section. He learned of work at Chautauqua County, and bidding adieu to his parents, set out on a journey of 200 miles. The young lad was, however, not far from relatives, for less than 50 miles away, at Buffalo, N. Y., lived an older brother, Irwin Beadle, and it was just a matter of a boat ride to visit him.

Just where in Chautauqua County young Beadle found employment is not stated, but it is doubtful that he had hired out as a farm hand, for such work could have been found nearer home. It is more probable that he found work as a harvest hand, beginning with the cherries in early summer and continuing with the other crops and ending with the grapes in the fall.

With darkness his labors for the day ended, and having nothing to occupy his time, Beadle sauntered to the village. Passing a print shop he observed the men producing the weekly newspaper. Watched perhaps, through the window, the printer operating the Washington hand press and marveled at the speed the papers were printed.

Beadle came to know which day was press day when he would find the shop lighted and the men toiling into the night. He grew bolder, entered the shop and conversed with the workers, perhaps volunteering to "pull" the press for awhile to allow the regular operator a brief respite. The feel of the impression intrigued him; the smell of printers' ink was like perfume to his nostrils; he enjoyed placing the wetted paper on the frisket and then pulling the press lever to bring the heavy platen into position to meet the inked type forms. Perhaps he only inked the forms; or at first only helped to fold the printed papers to the required size.

On subsequent visits to the shop he learned that the newspaper sold for five cents a copy; that about half of the revenue of the paper was derived from advertising. Beadle dreamed as

he gathered the fruit. Hundreds—yes, thousands of boys, could not get books to read because of their high cost. Yet a book no larger than a newspaper, yet folded differently, and cheaply bound, minus advertising, could be sold for ten cents.

The die was cast. Young Beadle resolved to become a publisher. He visited the print shop at every opportunity. He may even have learned a little of typesetting. The proprietor, observing the unrestrained enthusiasm of Beadle, offered him an opportunity to earn some money. One of their customers—a seed house—used large quantities of printed bags. The bag was made of heavy paper, but the lap where the two edges were fastened was never uniform, and wore out the type. To keep the font complete Beadle was instructed in carving letters out of the specially treated cherry wood, type high, that was used in making the wooden characters. He was taught how to operate a platen press, a different style of machine from that used to print the newspaper. Beadle was the diligent worker. He took pride in his work and employed every waking moment to become proficient. At the completion of the grape harvest Beadle prepared to return to his home. He had tastefully carved a complete alphabet of wooden letters from the cherry blocks, and these he was allowed to keep as a memento. It was these letters he carried in a gunny sack, not to print with, but to show his handiwork to his parents and friends, for without a press they were useless.

Back home in Cooperstown he sought employment as an apprentice and learned printing, stereotyping and small bookbinding under the tutelage of Ellhu Phinney. Five years later he opened a stereotype foundry in Buffalo, N. Y., and added printing equipment with the profits derived from this venture. Twelve years later he realized, in part, the dream he conceived in Chautauqua County, when he issued the *Youth's Casket*, containing general miscellany and short stories. Irwin Beadle had been in the news business in Buffalo and made a success selling songs and ballads printed on single sheets. Erastus Beadle, who viewed everything in the perspective of a small book, printed

a collection of these songs under the title of the "Dime Song Book."

The public reception of this book exceeded expectations and thus it was that the two Beadles journeyed to New York City, accompanied by Robert Adams. It is quite probable that Adams had been induced to partially finance the venture, for his connection with the Beadles became apparent when some of the publications carried the name Beadle & Adams.

Much has been told of Erastus Beadle's life after the dime novel became a success; yet far too little is known of his early life and where he conceived the idea to launch him on the career of publisher of a class of literature that brought down the mal-edictions of press and pulpit, teacher and parent, and whose true worth was not recognized until their founder had departed from this sphere.

Can't some of the members of the Brotherhood shed some light on the early life of our benefactor?

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The Banner Weekly, Vol. 9, No. 425.  
Jan. 3rd, 1891. Bannerettes, Page 4,  
3rd Column:

Our Author, William G. Patten, has given the readers of the Yankee Blade a capital serial story, and the Bladé has this to say as to the personality of the writer: "Mr. Patten knows the whole routine of newspaper work from that of printers devil to that of editor; but about three years ago he gave up newspaper work and devoted himself exclusively to story paper writing. The first year he made three times as much as he expected to make; and has never been hampered by the lack of money since. His stories are characterized by a keen dramatic, interested and a polished literary style. There are not two other authors in the country who furnish such neat copy for the printer. For this reason alone, innumerable editors rise up and bless him. Mr. Patten is tall, with dark hair and eyes and has been partially successful in raising a moustache." The fact is quite a number of our comparatively new contributors are rapidly coming to the front with their excellent literary work. Having discerned their merit, and given them recognition, we are, of course, much pleased to know that

the encouragement we have given was well bestowed.

#### NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

We hear that Frank Schott sold his collection of novels to Al Urban some time ago.

Just received a strange request from Don Learnard. He remembers reading about Dick Slater of the Liberty Boys of '76, performing special messenger service for General Washington. Dick starts out with dispatches and meets a rider by the name of Hepler who rides along with him. They stop at a hotel and the man tells Dick his name is James Williams. Next morning Williams fails to show up and Dick goes to his room to awaken him, but getting no answer, goes into the chamber and finds note addressed to himself starting: "Feel in your pockets for those dispatches you were to deliver. Ha! Ha! Ha! You are a smart man, Dick Slater, but you have been outwitted by a smarter man. I have those dispatches and will deliver them to General Howe, signed James Williams, alias William James." Needless to say, he captures Hepler in the end, and gets back the dispatches. Picture on the cover shows a country scene, raining hard, a British officer is riding Major, Dicks horse. Dick is shown leaping up and dealing the officer a blow, unhorsing him, thereby getting Major back. WHO KNOWS THE NUMBER and TITLE OF THIS COPY? Don wants to know.

Wm. Langell writes in interesting news on the old Police Gazette. He has a copy of Colliers Mag. published about 20 years ago, that gives the history of the Gazette. Tells when Richard K. Fox took it over. Fox added sports to the blood and thunder. The first issues of 1845 show it was originally put out to fight and expose criminals. In the Colliers it tells of a newsboy being almost killed by crooks in a saloon where he was peddling the first copy of the Gazette. The tough element didn't like to be written up.

Ralph Smith says he bought a framed picture of "The Scouts of Wyoming, A Story of '76." Begins in No. 490 of Frank Leslie's Boys and Girls

Weekly. It is in a gilded frame, complete with glass, all ready to hang. He wonders if any one else knows what it was for? Because it was a flyer put out to the stores advertising the Weekly. In colors. (Anyone interested in it?)

The only book devoted to pen names of the various authors of dime and nickel novels and story papers known is the "Millers Dime Novel Authors. 1860-1900," edited by W. C. Miller, and published by Ralph F. Cummings — price \$1.00. Not many copies left, better send for your copy now!

New address— George Flaum, 206 Prospect St., Newark (Wayne County) New York. Anyone writing to George must not get impatient, as he will be out on the road, but will answer all letters as soon as he can, so don't get discouraged fellows. He'll move on or about Oct. 1st, 1946.

Lou Kohrt says he got a copy of Beadles Half Dime Library #8, reprint from Charlie Bragin, and dug through his files and finds he has the same story in original form. He says the same story appeared in No. 355 of the Medal Library, title "Tracked Through the Wilds." The picture is similar to the one in Beadle's printed on page 9 except that the Beadle has the two hunters to right of the girl, with hunter shooting at Indian from foreground. On cover of Medal the hunters are to left of girl, with one standing with the Indian in foreground and hunter to the back left shooting at Indian. Also have a cloth bound book, same story, published by G. W. Dillingham Co., New York, in Feb. 1907. Title, "Seth Jones of New Hampshire." The frontispiece picture is of Seth Jones, and exactly as the picture on cover of Beadles No. 8. The book has other illustrations depicting happenings in the story. There is a lengthy introduction section in the book telling how a small town Sunday school had trouble with some very hot books in their Library, and how Edward Ellis brought it to light, and presented them with this dressed up story of Seth Jones, and they were surprised to learn, after several of the adults in the congregation had read it, that it was originally published as a dreaded dime novel. He also gives quite a writeup of Beadle & Adams, and how later poor Mr. Beadle was

crowded out by Munro.

A. J. Marks died over 2 years ago, so we just heard from his daughter, and George N. Beck died Feb. 1945 from a stroke, while walking on the street. Mr. R. J. Fee bought the place, gave all of Georges Novels, Story Papers, old newspapers, Circus programs, old court records, etc., to the local paper drive. He kept about 50 novels, such as Old Sleuth, Nick Carter, etc., and is asking \$25.00 for them. He says there were a large quantity of story papers, etc., and to think he gave away hundreds, yes, maybe thousands of dollars worth, and saves 50 novels of which he is asking \$25.00 for them. It's a shame, when some one gets a place like that, and you might as well say destroys a persons life savings. It's a shame, so fellow members, make a will, or something. What's to be done with your collection of old timers, don't let the scrap drives get it in the end. God Bless both Brothers Marks and George Beck.

Brother members that have been up to visit ye bro. Cummings are:

Sept. 1st, Kenneth Daggett from Lewiston, Maine, was down, and never saw so much stuff in his life. He also met Edward & Tilman Le Blanc of Fall River, Mass., who were up. We all had a grand time.

Sept. 2nd, Ralph Smith, wife and son were down.

Sept. 11th, J. C. Dykes and his wife and daughter were up from College Park, Md. and C. Richard Whittemore of Ashland, Mass., was also here. He had quite a talk with bro. Dykes.

Sept. 18th Ray Caldwell, his wife, sister, and her husband were up. He met me at Frank Henrys, also Clyde Wakefields, so we all had a joyous time. Ray bought the H. O. Rawson collection of novels, etc.

Sept. 25th, Capt. C. G. Mayo, Bryn Mawr, Pa., and a friend were up, in the morning, and George Flaum in the afternoon. Both Capt. Mayo and George Flaum have moved. Watch for new address of Capt. Mayo.

Gil Patten's son writes me that the "Merriwell" stories will go on the air over the NBC, Saturday, Oct. 5th, 10 to 10:30 a.m. EST. This is positive unless the Broadcasting Co. makes a change. The program will be weekly of one half hour duration. We are all sorry that Gil couldn't have been

alive to enjoy it. If you folks enjoy this program, drop a card to NBC Broadcasting Co. Thanks.

Mr. Ralph F. Cummings. Here is History, of a series of articles on Famous Hunters, Trappers, Scouts and Guides. No. 1. By Col. Charles D. Randolph. Daniel Boone—Born July 14th, 1732. Exeter, Pennsylvania, Famous Kentucky Hunter, Scout and Explorer, used the flint lock rifle. Died Sept. 26th, 1820, at St. Charles, Missouri, at the age of 86 years old.

Fred Orphall sent in Airwaves chatter (6-18-46) a half hour dramatic series based on the famous Frank Merriwell stories have been adapted for radio by Ruth and Gilbert Braun.

#### OBITUARY

**Sent in by Fred Orphal**  
from New York News, Dec. 2, 1945

Mrs. Julia E. Wolfe, mother of author, and novelist, Thomas Wolfe, died at 9:30 a.m. yesterday of a heart attack, at Lenox Hills Hospital. Mrs. Wolfe had been taken to the hospital Thursday night from her suite in the Hotel Royalton, suffering from a heavy cold. A resident of Asheville, N.C., she had been in New York to assist Prof. John S. Terry of New York University in preparing his biography of her son, who died in 1938, age 38. Among Wolfe's best known books were "Look Homeward Angel," "Of Time and the River," and "The Web and the Rock."

John M. Downie—Funeral services for John M. Downie, 78, retired policeman who was the inspiration for Horatio Alger, Jr.'s "Ragged Dick" Series, will be held at 1 p.m. today in the Shoap Funeral home, 122-11-18th Ave., College Point, Queens, New York. He

lived at 23-12-121st St., College Point. He died Wednesday. Alger picked him off the streets of the Bowery as an orphan newsboy, and cared for him as a son. Downie joined the force in 1898, a year before the author's death.

**WANTED—Books by A. M. Winfield-Stratemyer, F. F. Johnson, 1485 So. 2nd East, Salt Lake City 4, Utah.**

## WANTED

Beadles Dime Library #30, 33, 41, 44, 45, 51, 117, 137, 201, 204, 208, 221, 244, 256, 304, 322, 342, 394, 409, 511.

Beadles Half Dime Library #2, 30, 45, 59, 60, 72, 110, 162, 166, 185, 192, 194, 275, 278, 287, 304, 306, 314, 331, 364, 375, 381, 384, 387, 392, 404, 442, 482, 487, 495.

**HENRY STINEMETTS**  
223 W. 2nd St., Los Angeles, Calif.

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James Boys Weekly, or N.Y. Detective Library containing James Boys stories. Must be in good condition.

**Roy E. Morris**  
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**I will pay**  
\$2.50 for Liberty Boys of 76 #90  
**Don S. Learnard**  
(H. H. Bro. #41)  
23 Russell Terrace, Arlington 74, Mass.

#### PARTIAL LIST OF HAPPY HOURS BRO. MEMBERS

44. Delbert Love, Spencer, W. Va.
61. Benjamin F. Stetson, R. F. D. Tiffany Rd., Rockland, Mass.
66. Thomas W. Figley, West Liberty, Ohio.
110. H. O. Jacobsen, 1245 Fairview Ave., So. Milwaukee, Wisc.
150. C. V. Clark, 45 Aster Place, New York 3, N. Y.
182. Sam Tanenbaum, 135 Magnolia St., Hartford, Conn.
189. Leon Stone, Elgin St., Gordon, N. S. W., Australia.
191. Leverett S. Gleason, Magazine House, 114 E. 32nd St., New York 16, N. Y.

#### New Addresses

George H. Cordier, 650 West 117th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

George T. Flbaum, 206 Prospect St., Newark, Wayne County, N. Y.

Geo. H. Hess, Jr., 40 N. Mississippi River Blvd., St. Paul 4, Minn.

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**I NEED**

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I will give as high as 6 novels of certain kinds for one Frank Reade Weekly in First Class condition.

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The Cosmopolitan Art Journal, Bd. Vol. 4, 1860. Illust. fine 50c.

The Illustrated American Bd. Vol. 7, 1891. Lots of nice pictures worth framing in this Vol. Many articles on chess and what-not. \$2.00 takes it.

Professional Criminals of America, new and revised edition by Thomas Byrnes, late chief of police of New York City. 1895. Bd. Illust. Hundreds of pictures of criminals of the day, in it, with a complete description of them all. Bank Burglars, Pickpockets, Bank Sneaks, Bunco Steerer's, Thieves, Shoplifter, Forgers and what not. Worth over \$5.00. My price \$3.00 for it.

The Argosy, Vol. 7. Nos. 322 to 338. Lots of fine stuff in here. Bd. \$3.00 takes the vol.

Every Saturday in two bd. Vols. Vol. 1, Nos. 1 to 53. Jan. 1st, 1870 up, Vol. 2 Nos. 1 to ol. 3, No. 105. Wonderfully bound, well illustrated. \$10.00 takes all three vols., and they are well worth it too.

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**Ralph F. Cummings**

**Fisherville, Mass.**

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**Joseph Parks**  
2 Irvin Avenue, Saltburn-by-the-Sea,  
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Wanted— All Around #35 and 40.  
Geo. H. Hess, Jr., 40 N. Mississippi  
River Blvd., St. Paul 4, Minn.

I will trade 3 Wide Awake Library or 3 Beadles  $\frac{1}{2}$  Dime Lbry. in good condition for one James Boys Wkly. in good condition.

**Roy Morris**  
221-6th St., S. W., Mason City, Iowa

J. C. Dykes, 4511 Guilford Road, College Park, Md., wants "Bookman", for Aug. 1902, and Oct. 1904. Atlantic Monthly July 1907. Sat. Evening Post, June 11th, 1927. What have you?

Fred Lee, 4050 Cornelius Ave., Indianapolis 8, Ind. offers \$1.00 for just the covers of James Boys Weekly #43.

R. T. Welles, 214 South 42nd St., Phila, Pa. wants Nos. 139 and 140 of Wide Awake Library.

Wanted — Longman's Magazine; London, Sept. 1905. Colliers, Aug. 15th 1908. Strand, Jan. 1924. Nathan Bengis, 658 W. 188th St., New York 33, N. Y.